



21 Oak Street  
Suite 202  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(860) 246-7121  
www.env-ne.org

Rockport, ME

Portland, ME

Boston, MA

Providence, RI

Hartford, CT

Charlottetown, PE  
Canada

## Environment Northeast, Testimony on

### SB 384 AN ACT PROMOTING REGIONALISM IN THE STATE

Jessie Stratton, Deputy Director,  
March 2, 2009

Good morning, Senator Coleman, Representative Sharkey and Members of the Committee. My name is Jessie Stratton; I am Deputy Director of Environment Northeast, an environmental research and advocacy organization with offices in CT, MA, RI, ME and Eastern Canada. Our primary focus is on climate, energy and air quality issues and we have worked closely with legislatures here and in other jurisdictions to promote energy efficiency in numerous sectors as the most cost effective way to further energy independence, improve air quality and achieve the greenhouse gas reductions the state committed to in last year's comprehensive global warming solutions bill, while also strengthening our local economy.

Nationwide, buildings account for more than 40% of the GHG emissions and while CT has done a good job of adopting the most recent international building code standards, these standards do not begin to require the level of energy efficiency that is cost effectively achievable in new construction. We therefore propose that the committee include the authority for municipalities to adopt the more energy efficient federal Energy Star certification as a requirement for new residential construction. As with other proposals before you, this legislation would not require any municipality to adopt such a requirement, but it would offer them an option not currently available. For the many CT municipalities that have become so-called 20/20 towns by committing to achieve a 20% reduction in GHGs by 2020, such enabling legislation would provide a cost effective way to help them achieve their goals.

Energy Star certification requires an advanced inspection to ensure that a home will perform as designed, resulting in even greater energy savings. In addition to the higher standard, one of the benefits of this requirement is that currently the energy portion of building codes is not consistently enforced. For example, a 1998 Massachusetts compliance study found that only 46% of new homes met the state's energy code. More recently, a 2004 Long Island study found that 75% of new homes did not meet the performance of the state's energy code. That study projected that the cost of meeting Energy Star new construction standards would add only about \$1000 to the construction costs of a new home. The cost-effective measures added by the increased construction

costs provide \$200-\$400 in annual savings to the building owner and would reduce Connecticut's electrical system consumption and peak demand.

Allowing adoption of the Energy Star standard would encourage CT developers to provide new home buyers with benefits more comparable to those in other states. In 2007 only 14% of new homes constructed in Connecticut were built to Energy Star standards, compared to 48% and 27% respectively for New Jersey and Vermont.

There are currently 152 residential developers in Connecticut who are official "new home partners" with the ENERGY STAR program. Several of these have already committed to building only ENERGY STAR Qualified homes and numerous developments in the state have advertised themselves as such to appeal to potential buyers.

Any home three stories or less can earn the ENERGY STAR label if it has been verified to meet EPA's guidelines, including: single family, attached, and low-rise multi-family homes; manufactured homes; systems-built homes (e.g., Structural Insulated Panels, Insulated Concrete Forms, or modular construction); log homes, concrete homes; and even existing retrofitted homes.

To earn ENERGY STAR certification, a home must meet guidelines for energy efficiency set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These homes are at least 15% more energy efficient than homes built to the 2004 International Residential Code (IRC). ENERGY STAR homes feature improved air sealing, insulation, and ductwork, energy-efficient windows, and are independently tested to ensure that the home is performing as it should and that the homeowner will receive the benefit of reduced utility costs.

We would be happy to work with the committee to incorporate this authorization in bills before you and have attached proposed language.

Thank you for your interest.

Contact:

Jessie Stratton, Deputy Director  
Environment Northeast  
21 Oak Street Suite 202  
Hartford, Ct 06106  
jstratton@env-ne.org  
860-246-7121  
860-983-4046 C